



# SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

May 6, 2019

Pete Holmes  
Seattle City Attorney

RE: Filing Claims Against Fossil Fuel Corporations

Dear City Attorney Holmes,

The Seattle City Council is in support of your strategy to file claims against fossil fuel corporations on behalf of the City and its residents. We are aware that you are waiting for the outcome of the cases currently under review by the United States 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals before proceeding further. We support you in this strategy and applaud your strong stance to hold fossil fuel corporations responsible for their contributions to climate change. We thank you for retaining an outside law firm that would only be paid attorneys' fees if it successfully secures a settlement or victory in the courtroom, so as to ensure that public dollars are spent wisely.

A number of other local jurisdictions, including New York City, Los Angeles, and King County, have filed claims as well.

Globally, climate change has the most devastating impact on the nations of the Global South; nations that have done the least to contribute to global warming and that have benefited the least from carbon-intensive development. Domestically, the impacts of climate change are falling most heavily on communities of color, low-income communities and Indigenous communities, which again have done the least to cause the problem and benefited the least from carbon-intensive development. For example, by 2100 Squaxin Island, home of the Squaxin Island Tribe, will be inundated by sea-level rise. These lands, disappearing under the ocean, are central to the Tribe's natural resources-based economy and culture.

**Climate change also takes a huge economic toll — and like the rest of the country and the planet, Seattle will be impacted by the economic costs of climate change.**

According to analysis by Zillow, drawing on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data, 0.9% of Seattle's current housing stock (1,663 homes), worth \$2.3B, will be inundated by sea-level rise by 2100. The Office of Sustainability and Environment has reported that the increased number of storm surges, occurrences of flooding, and decreased hydro-electric capacity—all impacts of global warming—will cost the city, financially and materially.

Fossil fuel companies have caused this problem. Just the five fossil fuel companies targeted by New York City's lawsuit are collectively responsible for approximately 11% of all human-caused greenhouse gas pollution. These are the same companies that knew for decades that their product was causing major climate destabilization, yet rather than inform the public, they spent tens of millions of dollars on efforts to cover the reality of climate science. This has been well-documented in investigative journalism carried out by InsideClimateNews, the Los Angeles Times and the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, which found that ExxonMobil executives have known that burning fossil fuels would warm the climate since at least the 1970's.



# SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

The oil and gas industry should be held accountable. As the chief legal representative of our City, we support your intent to file claims against the fossil fuel industry and do everything within your power to seek justice on behalf of our community.

Sincerely,

Council President Bruce Harrell

Councilmember Mike O'Brien

Councilmember Sally Bagshaw

Councilmember Lisa Herbold

Councilmember M. Lorena González

Councilmember Abel Pacheco

Councilmember Kshama Sawant

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda

Councilmember Debora Juarez